

The Irish Theosophist.

"THE BHAGAVAD GITA" IN PRACTICAL LIFE.

(Continued from p. 105.)

At first sight the statement that peace is a resultant of pain may appear strange, even revolting, to some minds. To such, the idea may seem to savour of the pernicious attractions of self-martyrdom and self-immolation; that torture of the self which is one of the strangest of the many forms of personal vanity. To desire martyrdom for its own sake; to intoxicate the brain with the subtle image of one's moral heroism—this is but one step from that fanaticism which rushes towards suffering and burdens which form no part of our own duty and which were never awarded to us by that destiny which we call the Law. To a mind thus rendered drunk by its own greatness no distinction of duty is possible. It embraces hard and distasteful tasks for the sake of embracing them, and in the hope of thus demonstrating its own heroism to itself. Self-torment, self-immolation, are often but other names for self-intrusion into places and conditions where we had no business to go: a thrusting of one's self, led by the most insidious form of vanity, into a path where Karma never intended we should tread; a path of pain we have forced and made our own.

Such pain does not bring peace. It is a state of war. It is as necessary to be just to one's self as to any other, for all are equal in the balance of that Law which "is no respecter of persons." In the pursuance of our duty we shall need no pain; and this is just and right, for Karma brought us there. Such pain is outweighed by a keen and ever-increasing delight, the pure joy of service, and is indeed the swiftest of the peace-bringers. Upon the points of motive and duty then the whole question turns.

Our motives are obscure. To us as much—and sometimes more—as to any other. We can only endeavour to fathom them, reading them

often by the future light thrown upon them by our reactions. That is, we imagine ourselves to be acting unselfishly in some work. The work is a success, but does not turn out as we intended. Or some one else has the credit and we are set aside. Or the work fails. We then feel pain, annoyance, disappointment, and, as by a search-light, the soul reveals to us that our motive was not pure. Or we imagine it to be our duty to expose some wrong, and to do it at the cost of some pain to ourselves. We do expose it, and the wrong is found to be no wrong. Or the world believes us not. Or we fail and instead of turning then to other work we persist in striving to get a verdict against the offence or the offender. Failing still, we harden into a place and a state of being where we persist in the futile effort, and it has now become an effort to vindicate our own judgment, to demonstrate our own rightful courage, our martyr stand. Well indeed is it for us then if the Law permits that our heart shall shine out and show us our own error. It costs much pain. Yet hath the contrary course a greater anguish still. Our motives are indeed obscure. But a high courage, a sincere desire to serve, may bring light to the riddle little by little and in due season.

The pain that ends in peace is that which the Law appoints, and the peace is to be seized and confirmed at any moment.

If we look but a little way into this subject we see that physical pain, for example, when it is removed, leaves with the sufferer a sense of peace. Such a sense of peace is lacking in the presence of actual joy. The peace results from contrast. This is only another way of saying that Nature then works with us, pointing out that the removal of discord brings peace, and not the mere presence of pleasure. In other words, discordant conditions of mind or of body are productive of pain because they are opposed to the main course of universal Nature. When they are removed, Nature takes her unobstructed way and peace prevails.

Turning now to the mental and moral sources of pain, we find them to be identical. I sin against the inner light and my moral being is torn. I cling to my forms of belief, whether in religion, in friendship, in love, in what not else; the false erection crumbles and I grieve. Why? Is it not because "I" have lost something? But I have not. Nothing is lost. The false mirage has vanished, that is all. I may arise and pursue my journey unimpeded by the cheat.

Or I lose, apparently, the true and truly loved. Have I lost them? Are they not mine for ever in the realm of soul? Would I keep them back from heavenly joys, the well-earned rest, the deep arcana of spiritual assimilation? The heart, convicted once again of

the sin of self-seeking, even in the purest love, sighs as it makes its answer. Well, in that sigh it is nearer the Real than it perhaps thinks.

"If I suffer, it is self that suffers, not I. That is an awful doctrine and too hard except for the few. But it is God's truth. By asserting it as true, with or without the acceptance of the brain; by affirming with quiet persistence that this is fact whether one cares to accept it or not, the mind in time becomes impressed with the idea, works on it, digests it. That done, one rises superior to the suffering. An old story! And with it goes another, that those who suffer would do well to wander through the streets of their own city and find those who suffer with them from the same cause. They would soon find that their compassion for the pain of others, and their efforts to relieve it, would melt their own grief into a flame of love of a universal and divine nature—once they forgot themselves in the greater pain around them."

These words indicate still another facet of the shining truth that pain brings peace. For see what deep peace comes when once we merge ourselves into the endless compassion which reaches out to the whole world and yearns to serve those agents of the Law who only live by it and their compassion for the worlds where pain is known. It is the pain inseparable from life and from our lives as we have fashioned them, which, rightly borne, brings peace. Shall we either fear or love it? Need it be either sought, as by the fanatic, or avoided, as by the epicure? Not so, standing upon that middle ground which is our own duty, we, masters of ourselves, need not fear the accost of pain. Looking steadfastly upon it, we find it in every instance to arise from some concept of our own possessions, our own rights, something sequestered from Nature. We yield up these mental possessions, and no longer shut out from the Boundless, we enter its tides in their flowing and the sweetness of peace is ours. It may not last. Again and again we enter the state of war. But the peace is within us, we remember it, we acclaim it, we, heirs of hope, we expect it; its leaven works within us; again and again we enter the state of peace also, until we learn that it is always to be found there where we lay down the personal will and the personal image. And then indeed we know that this pain we have met, accosted, accepted, have calmly housed awhile, was indeed the peace-bringer because it was the truth-bearer: it ceased to be pain to our sight and became a great white peace when we yielded up our self-will to Divine Will, and ceased to oppose at heart the onward march of Nature and Soul.

JULIA W. L. KEIGHTLEY.

(To be continued.)

THE FIRE-FOUNTAIN OF LOCH LEIN.

IN the south of green Eri is an ancient ruined abbey. Centuries have given its walls a soft grey hue, and ivy twines itself about the crumbling stones. Its cloisters have long since been given over to shadows of pale monks gliding to and fro, missal in hand, or with lips moving as they silently recite their Pater Nosters and Ave Marias, dreamily telling their beads the while. Yet the murmur of the lake sweeping over the white rocks, the song of the wind rushing through the trees, speak of a past still living in a memory greater than that of man.

Walking in the dim haunted cloisters one day, musing on the hidden greatness of Eri and her dreamy-hearted children, I felt the presence of another beside me. I turned, and saw a figure robed and hooded after the fashion of an ancient order of monks. I noted the dark ascetic face and the burning eyes full of an unutterable sadness. Half unheeding me, he paced up and down, speaking aloud his thoughts :

“Is everything but vain desire, and life itself but a mockery? Are the long years of striving and search to count for naught, or is it true that beyond the grave lies only darkness? Once I had dreams of a higher wisdom, of power that men might possess, of magical deeds that men might do ; but all are gone, and nothing remains but a heart desolate and torn by a myriad cravings and unnumbered fears.”

Ere I could question him he turned his sorrow-laden eyes upon me and continued, as though conscious of the words I would have said :

“In my youth I had dreams of a mighty past, and a still mightier future. I saw myself moving among men many ages ago, and I deemed it possible that in the future I would so move again. Then something awoke within me, a burning desire to know the mystery of all things. I wandered by the lake and o’er the mountain-brow, in cities amidst crowds, striving to unveil the mystery in which we dwelt, the mystery we ourselves were. Sometimes on the crest of the mountain, when the first rays of the sun illumined the greyness, the cloud enwrapping me would lift, and I felt the wondrous mystery unfolding. Then, as a butterfly eludes the hand stretched out to grasp it, this gleam of greater knowledge would pass away, and again I returned to the vague ques-

tionings and wonders of a heart not content with the fleeting glories of earth.

"Years passed by, and the beauty of life revealed itself to me in love for my fair young cousin, but even that glimmered amid the clouds of doubt and fear. Love was a flying shadow, I said, though my heart's voice whispered it was eternal. So I heeded not the voice, resolutely turning from a love that had no power to still the unrest, the never-ending search for something undying, all-peaceful. At last I sought these cloisters; a great weariness beset me, hope had well-nigh deserted me; here I would find quietude and rest, I thought. It was a vain thought; rest approaches others, yet holds aloof from me."

For a moment he hesitated, and then half murmured to himself:

"Perhaps we are those ancient gods whose glories the bards sang long ago, and from our mountain-homes we came to wield a greater sceptre here. Now only a dim memory of the past remains to urge us on to the future, and half blindly we stumble forward, hoping and fearing always." His dreamy tone changed, and quickly he exclaimed: "Behold this. Night after night have I watched it; none other here can see."

I stood by a pillar and looked into the darkening enclosure. What was this marvel happening before us? Into the past my mind travelled; that past when the wise Druids built their temples on many a sacred hill and in many a vale through our fair isle. The far-spreading tree in the cloisters disappeared, and in its place towered a column of waving golden flame. Majestic white-robed figures, with glittering symbols on their breasts, moved round it with arms upraised, chanting as they paced. Then one by one they entered the fire and passed into a hidden way. The last turned and raised a beckoning hand, and in obedience to that, without fear or trembling, we also stood in the flame together. A rending and a rushing sound, and we floated down one of those rivers of fire which are the life of the world. At last we came to a cavern deep, deep in the earth, where were assembled beings whose vestures were as the changing sunset-hues, and whose diadems were flowers of jewel-like radiance. And one among them, more brilliant than all others there, to him they gave allegiance as to one possessing greater wisdom than they. Silently we watched and wondered. Who were these with the calm of ages shining in their eyes, and the seal of life upon their brows? What was the meaning of this assemblage, and why were we bidden to attend? Even as we questioned ourselves thus a single ray of light gleamed from the leader. In obedience to that ray we saw the starry beings act. Some tended the fires buried deep

in the heart of the hills, keeping them ever bright. Some departed to the ancient temples to build anew the mists which conceal them from mankind, for not yet could men know of the existence of these homes of knowledge. Some went to men and women, giving them dreams of life in other worlds, and in those dreams teaching them the eternal wisdom. And we saw how these men and women woke in the dawning with a golden glow at their hearts; with a strength of will and a peace that no earth-troubles could disturb or dim for even a moment.

Then the great one spoke to us—not indeed in words, but we understood—and said that once these were men who had passed long years in weariness, doubt and striving; remembering, sometimes faintly, sometimes clearly, that they themselves were of that ancient race of gods that at one time peopled Eri, and who will return to it again—nay, who are even now returning, for they make themselves visible to those who turn their hearts towards them, who long to be with them once more.

Then he glanced at my companion and said:

“O passionate-hearted one, may you have peace. You have lingered long on the way, yet you too are one of the immortals. Often before you have battled successfully in wars we have waged against the dark hosts; in that which is still to be done you also have a part, and future ages shall tell how your voice, clear-sounding, far-reaching, carried its message of light and life over sea and land to many weary hearts.”

A touch light as a fluttering leaf rested for an instant on my eyes; the cavern and the shining figures grew dim, then passed away, and the shadowy monk disappeared. Once more I saw the old cloisters, and heard the light laughter of my friends as they stood by the lake. Pondering upon the meaning of what I had seen and heard, I left the abode of shadows and walked under the sunlit trees.

LAON.

PRIEST OR HERO?

"I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contained,

I stand and look at them long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,

They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,

No one kneels to another, nor to one of his kind that lived thousands of years ago."—WALT WHITMAN.

I HAVE prefixed some ideas about spiritual freedom addressed to the people of Ireland with these lines from the poet of another land, because national sentiment seems out of date here, the old heroism slumbers, alien thought and an exotic religion have supplanted our true ideals and our natural spirituality. I hoped that the scornful words of one who breathed a freer air might sting to shame those who have not lost altogether the sentiment of human dignity, who have still some intuitions as to how far and how wisely a man may abase himself before another, whether that other claim divine authority or not. For this is the true problem which confronts us as a nation, and all else is insignificant beside. We have found out who are the real rulers here, who dictate politics and public action with no less authority than they speak upon religion and morals. It was only the other day that a priest, one of our rulers, declared that he would not permit a political meeting to be held in his diocese, and his fiat was received with a submission which showed how accurately the politician gauged the strength opposed to him. And this has not been the only occasion when this power has been exerted: we all know how many national movements have been interfered with or thwarted; we know the shameful revelations connected with the elections a few years back; we know how a great leader fell; and those who are idealists, God's warriors battling for freedom of thought, whose hope for the world is that the intuitions of the true and good divinely implanted in each man's breast shall supersede tradition and old authority, cannot but feel that their opinions, so much more dangerous to that authority than any political ideal, must, if advocated, bring them at last to clash with the priestly power. It is not a war with religion we would fain enter

upon; but when those who claim that heaven and hell shut and open at their bidding for the spirit of man, use the influence which belief in that claim confers, as it has been here, to fetter free-will in action, it is time that the manhood of the nation awoke to sternly question that authority, to assert its immemorial right to freedom.

There lived of old in Eri a heroic race whom the bards sang as fearless. There was then no craven dread of the hereafter, for the land of the immortals glimmered about them in dream and vision, and already before the decaying of the form the spirit of the hero had crossed the threshold and clasped hands with the gods. No demon nature affrighted them: from them wielding the flaming sword of will the demons fled away as before Cuculain vanished in terror shadowy embattled hosts. What, I wonder, would these antique heroes say coming back to a land which preserves indeed their memory but emulates their spirit no more? We know what the bards thought when heroic Ireland became only a tradition; when to darkened eyes the elf-lights ceased to gleam, luring no more to the rich radiant world within, the Druidic mysteries, and the secret of the ages. In the bardic tales their comrade Ossian voices to Patrick their scorn of the new. Ah, from the light and joy of the faery region, from that great companionship with a race half divine, come back to find that but one divine man had walked the earth, and as for the rest it was at prayer and fasting they ought to be! And why? Because, as Patrick explained to Ossian, if they did not they would go to hell. And this is the very thing the Patricks ever since have been persuading the Irish people to believe, adding an alien grief unto their many sorrows, foisting upon them a vulgar interpretation of the noble idea of divine justice to cow them to submission with the threat of flame. Ossian, chafing and fuming under the priestly restriction, declared his preference for hell with the Finians to paradise with Patrick. His simple heroic mind found it impossible to believe that the pure, gentle, but indomitable spirits of his comrades could be anywhere quenched or quelled, but they must at last arise exultant even from torment. When Ossian rejects the bribe of paradise to share the darker world and the fate of his companions, there spake the true spirit of man; spark of illimitable deity; shrouded in form, yet radiating ceaselessly heroic thoughts, aspirations, deathless love; not to be daunted, rising again and again from sorrow with indestructible hope; emerging ever from defeat, its glooms smitten through and through with the light of visions vast and splendid as the heavens. Old bard, old bard, from Tir-na-noge where thou, perchance wrapt by that beauty which called thee from earth, singest

immortal songs, would that one lightning of thy spirit could pierce the hearts now thronged with dread, might issue from lips which dare not speak.

I do not question but that the heroic age had its imperfections, or that it was not well that its too warlike ardour was tempered by the beautiful, pathetic and ennobling teaching of Christ. The seed of new doctrines bore indeed many lovely but exotic blossoms in the saintly times, and also many a noxious weed. For religion must always be an exotic which makes a far-off land sacred, rather than the earth under-foot: where the Great Spirit whose home is the vast seems no more a moving glamour in the heavens, a dropping tenderness at twilight, a visionary light on the hills, a voice in man's heart; when the way of life is sought in scrolls or is heard from another's lips. The noxious weed, the unendurable bitter which mingled with the sweet and true in this exotic religion was the terrible power it put into the hands of men somewhat more learned in their ignorance of God than those whom they taught: the power to inflict a deadly wrong upon the soul, to coerce the will by terror from the course conscience had marked out as true and good. That power has been used unsparingly and at times with unspeakable cruelty whenever those who had it thought their influence was being assailed, for power is sweet and its use is not lightly laid aside.

As we read our island history there seems a ruddy emblazonry on every page, a hue shed from behind the visible, the soul dropping its red tears of fire over hopes for ever dissolving, noble ambitions for ever foiled. Always on the eve of success starts up some fatal figure weaponed with the Keys of the Hereafter, brandishing more especially the key of the place of torment, warning most particularly those who regard that that key shall not get rusty from want of turning if they disobey. It has been so from the beginning, from the time of the cursing of Tara, where the growing unity of the nation was split into fractions, down to the present time. I often doubt if the barbarities in eastern lands which we shudder at are in reality half so cruel, if they mean so much anguish as this threat of after-torture does to those who believe in the power of another to inflict it. It wounds the spirit to the heart: its consciousness of its own immortality becomes entwined with the terror of as long enduring pain. It is a lie which the all-compassionate Father-Spirit never breathed into the ears of his children, a lie which has been told here century after century with such insistence that half the nation has the manhood cowed out of it. The offence of the dead chief whose followers were recently assailed weighed

light as a feather in the balance when compared with the sin of these men and their shameful misuse of religious authority in Meath a little while ago. The scenes which took place there, testified and sworn to by witnesses in the after trials, were only a copy of what generally took place. They will take place again if the necessity arises. That is a bitter fact.

A dim consciousness that their servitude is not to God's law but to man's ambition is creeping over the people here. That is a very hopeful sign. When a man first feels he is a slave he begins to grow grey inside, to get moody and irritable. The sore spot becomes more sensitive the more he broods. At last to touch it becomes dangerous. For, from such pent-up musing and wrath have sprung rebellions, revolutions, the overthrow of dynasties and the fall of religions, aye, thrice as mighty as this. That thought of freedom lets loose the flood-gates of an illimitable fire into the soul; it emerges from its narrow prison-cell of thought and fear as the sky-reaching genie from the little copper vessel in the tale of Arabian enchantment; it lays hand on the powers of storm and commotion like a god. It would be politic not to press the despotism more; but it would be a pity perhaps if some further act did not take place, just to see a nation flinging aside the shackles of superstition; disdainful of threats, determined to seek its own good, resolutely to put aside all external tradition and rule; adhering to its own judgment, though priests falsely say the hosts of the everlasting are arrayed in battle against it, though they threaten the spirit with obscure torment for ever and ever: still to persist, still to defy, still to obey the orders of another captain, that Unknown Deity within whose trumpet-call sounds louder than all the cries of men. There is great comfort, my fellows, in flinging fear aside; an exultation and delight spring up welling from inexhaustible deeps, and a tranquil sweetness also ensues which shows that the powers ever watchful of human progress approve and applaud the act.

In all this I do not aim at individuals. It is not with them I would war but with a tyranny. They who enslave are as much or more to be pitied than those whom they enslave. They too are wronged by being placed and accepted in a position of false authority. They too enshrine a ray of the divine spirit, which to liberate and express is the purpose of life. Whatever movement ignores the needs of a single unit, or breeds hate against it rather than compassion, is so far imperfect. But if we give these men, as we must, the credit of sincerity, still opposition is none the less a duty. The spirit of man must work out its own destiny, learning truth out of error and pain. It cannot be moral by

proxy. A virtuous course into which it is whipt by fear will avail it nothing, and in that dread hour when it comes before the Mighty who sent it forth, neither will the plea avail it that its conscience was in another's keeping.

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(To be concluded.)

A WARRIOR'S WEAPONS.

THE SWORD.

THE will is a warrior's first weapon and may be best described as a sword. And as there are many kinds of swords—curved, two-edged, of steel, silver and lead, and in various conditions, sharp, dull, bright, and rusty, so there are many kinds of wills. The underlying qualities of a sword are sharpness, quickness and force. The underlying qualities of will are the highest expressions of force in all Nature.

A sword is carried in a scabbard. The scabbard of will is desire. To use a sword to advantage we draw it from its scabbard, and so to use our will effectively we must first dissociate it from desire. To use it otherwise is to abuse our highest faculty and to render ourselves an easy prey to our first enemy.

Before we can be given a real sword and be taught fencing we must learn the difference between friend and foe, peace and war; otherwise we shall slay our own kin. We must also learn to take proper care of a sword.

Time may be likened to a stream of lava issuing from a volcano; beginning in vapour and gas, it condenses and becomes a molten stream, it hardens and becomes rock. The moment the present passes into the past is like the moment the lava hardens and becomes rock. The future we can alter and mould as we will, even the present, with a strong will, we can greatly change; but to beat our will upon the past and wish it otherwise is like using a sword against rocks, we dull it if not break it and yet accomplish nothing.

When we have learned to care for a sword and to use it properly—not to cut ourselves or fight against our fellows—we may be trusted with a real sword. Each man must for himself win the right, and forge his own sword. If we "help Nature and work on with her" she will furnish us the metals, and if we persist in seeking for it we shall find the hidden fire needed to melt them. "When the materials are ready the Master shall appear" who will show us how to forge a true sword.

When our sword is forged and tried and we have proved our own

valour, we may enter the ranks of the warriors of old, the protectors and guardians of the race, and be on our way to the front of battle.

"He that useth the sword shall perish by the sword," applies only to him that useth the sword for self. The knights of old did not so, they fought in the cause of the weak and the wronged. He that fighteth thus, consecrating and abandoning his acts, shall never perish.

THE DAGGER.

This word is merely a warning, for the dagger is not in good repute among warriors and is never carried by the victors of the white race. It is the weapon of anger.

Anger is not able to wield the mighty sword of a warrior and hence requires a smaller weapon. To be secure against this foe within we must cast away all such, for they are useless against the real enemy; and so long as we have one with us, no matter how deeply hidden or put away, we know not what moment anger may seize upon us and its weapon, and break forth.

Men of the world are not allowed real weapons, nor any save such as are of base metals, rusty or dull, but a warrior is trusted, his own keeper and the guardian of the race. When he has won and tested his true sword let him trust to that alone and cast away all lesser weapons; in their place he shall gain a counter—inner—power, a power of peace.

RAFE HOPTON.

THE SUPREME MOMENT.

WHEN in a moment of divine repose,
My spirit breaks its earthly bars,
I hear the blushful secret of the rose,
The murmur of the stars.

And every living thing of high or low
Hath its own fitting time and place;
The meanest weeds that bud and blossom show
Beauty's eternal face.

And in the broken song of life I see
How word and deed dissevered rhyme;
And all its aching discords grow for me
The radiant song of time.

PAUL GREGAN.

ROBERT BROWNING.

I.—HIS INSPIRATION.

OF the many phases in which the great soul known to our time as Robert Browning presents its meaning and its message to men, it is the object of this article to select only one upon which to direct our thought. Poet, thinker, moralist, man of the world, humorist and idealist as he was, he was far greater than all these, being in the largest and only final sense a mystic. It is not so much as the herald of a new day for man or the bearer of a new message from the realm of spirits that his influence is felt to be most pervasive, his presence in our hearts most potent. It is rather as an inspirer of men that he appeals to our inner nature and exacts our homage, and it is in this relation that I venture to call him a mystic and to claim for him a great place in the kingdom of manifested souls; for this, it seems to me, is—so far as we can determine that which for most of us lies partly beyond the veil—the function among men of a mystic: to rouse men to a sense of their own majesty; to proclaim, not so much in uttered thoughts as in projected impulses, the real issues of life; to impart vitality to ethics, to make thought living and instinct with divine presences; to breathe through the joys of men and idealize them, through the sorrows of men and inspire them; to rouse torpor into divine unrest and passion into aspiration; not merely to sing of the soul or to persuade us of its beauty, but to *be* the soul, and by vital impact to touch and stir that mighty being that slumbers in the hearts of all men. There have been, even in this iron age of ours, many men known through their writings who have pleaded the cause of spirit, who have reminded us of our heritage as men, and pointed to divine destinies lying for us beyond the limits of the life we know; but of those who have so gained recognition in literature I only know one who was preëminently an inspirer of souls, an imparter of life, and he was Robert Browning.

When I look through his writings for quotation or example in proof of what I have said I own to a certain embarrassment. The secrets of spiritual strength were never wholly said in song; it is rather in shadowy suggestion, in thoughts that loom too large for utterance, in spiritual emotions thrown upon a mental sheet too small to contain them, that we feel the presence of the soul than in any well-defined conception or finely-wrought phrase; it is less by what he tells us than by what we infer of the untold; less by the expansion of his philosophy

into thoughts than by the touch of his total manhood upon ours that we know how whole and strong and propellent Browning is. Like the deity of his own concept he

"Presses close and palpitatingly

His soul o'er ours,"

and the surgings of life within him have set free some of the latent force which is innate in the common heart, and whose vibrations sing within us the music of his secret power. Perhaps of his shorter poems "Rabbi Ben Ezra," "Abt Vogler," "Prospice," and the "Epilogue to Asolando," best realize his gift of imparting aspirations with the same vital power that distinguishes a flower in diffusing fragrance. Take the often-quoted lines from the first-named poem :

"Be our joys three parts pain

Strive and hold cheap the strain,

Toil, nor account the pang,

Dare, never grudge the throe."

This may not be music, it may not be thought, it may not be art, but it is certainly impulse, it is certainly motive force, it is certainly life; it comes to us as words, it enters us as vital energy, it remains with us as aspiration. Out of the heart of humanity—the humanity for which he wrought—there has passed into our heart a tense will not to be known by any term of science or of art; a desire to be and to become which passes out of those regions of thought of which it is possible to speak with definiteness, and into those where thought has become assimilate with life. Or take this single phrase out of that song of triumph over death (the most triumphant song in English verse), the "Epilogue to Asolando":

"Greet the unseen with a cheer."

Is there any more perfect way of expressing the assurance that death is nought, of filling the mind with a buoyant trust in the vast resources of nature and the unconquerable vitality of soul? It is the optimism of a nature which was intensely living at every point and whose life was one supreme exultation, that is Browning's greatest charm, and it is the aspiration which springs from this—an aspiration paramount, continuous, unflagging, to realize all the divine purposes of life—which lifts him above the rank of teacher, and gives him a place in the spiritual hierarchies of all time as one who has passed on to men not merely the secret but the power of strenuous purpose and heroic deed.

OMAR.

(*To be continued.*)

SOME ASPECTS OF BROTHERHOOD.

LIFE as we see it to-day presents on the surface a seeming chaos. Yet nature meets us exactly where we stand, and we respond to that aspect of civilization which we feel our natures drawn towards. Art, music, science, philanthropy, religion, places of amusement, offer abundant scope to satisfy and develop the different parts of our nature.

We could not have had those different movements without something first of all having arisen in human nature to necessitate their expression. Now being expressed, they are the means of drawing others who have any of those particular tendencies. All aspects of civilization have their place in the scheme of evolution, if we think of man as a soul, and it is on this recognition that I think the basis of brotherhood rests, for it at once breaks down all distinction between race and class, and without that basis of equality there can be no true brotherhood.

Everyone does not believe in the existence of the soul, and it is a part of our nature which it is impossible to prove the existence of, in a certain sense. It would be like trying to prove that we ourselves exist, while perfectly conscious that we do not know ourselves. To say that we exist because we have a physical body, and a mind and senses by which we recognize, see and feel it, does not prove very much, unless we believe that the universe, ourselves included, was evolved out of nothing and by no one.

No matter how much we trace or analyze what we perceive as human beings, we always come to a point where out of the invisible the visible appears, out of the unknown comes the known. So that one is forced, I think, to believe in that very ancient doctrine—that underlying all things there is an eternal, immutable spirit, in which the visible and the known appear and disappear. If all manifestation is contained in an eternal, universal spirit, then that spirit exists always and in-us, seeing that a part is always contained in and forms part of the whole; and if we exist through and in this universal spirit, then the real part of us must be immortal, because that which endures is more real than that which passes away. If we believe this, then our ideas of the things in physical life undergo a change, because then the kindest and most brotherly actions are those based on the idea that man is a soul. Brotherhood then takes the form of doing what one can to bring people nearer to that which is real.

Looking at life with this idea it is hard to see in the rush for fame,

money and comfort, and the effects brought about by these desires, namely, luxury and poverty facing us side by side, jealousy, envy, and all the attending miseries which accompany their gratification, how anything can be gained by this rushing turmoil of forces which can bring us nearer to that immortal part of ourselves. But it is evident that if we were strong and wise enough to resist the forces which bring about these effects they would not be there, and it is only by living where these forces are that we know whether we will be swayed by them, or indifferent to their influence.

Belief is not conviction, and thinking a thing is true is not knowing the truth of it, but how many people attempt to make their beliefs knowledge to themselves?

We build ideals very often, without realizing what that ideal represents in life, and without thinking about the changes which must take place before we make it part of our nature. In all ages and by all peoples the highest ideal put forward has been the nature of the soul, ever giving ideas of beauty, goodness and truth, and of a state which earthly desires have no power to influence. We have thoughts about high ideals, yet too often, in the trials which test us, we allow the thoughts to slip away and act from the part of our nature we are familiar with.

If the soul is the real part of us, it is but logical to think that there must be a way of knowing ourselves through self-knowledge, and daily life gives us this opportunity. We all know that we have very complex natures, but in that complexity a distinct duality; one ever drawing us to things spiritual and guiding us by the voice of conscience, the other towards the transient by our earthly desires.

If our ideals are spiritual, then naturally our ideas about brotherhood are based upon those ideals. But ideas and ideals which always remain in the abstract are of very little use to humanity, and we only make them living by acting from them. They then become part of our intelligence, and it is our intelligence which acts in everyday life. If we act foolishly it shows that we have not yet developed the intelligence which recognizes deeply enough that the act is foolish. When through suffering and experience we recognize that selfishness, vice and crime are not desirable paths to tread, we will then have the intelligence which possesses that knowledge. We are gaining that knowledge now through our personal desires, which take us through the many and varied experiences of human life, until at last we realize that all the sufferings and sorrows of humanity are caused by selfishness and gratification of earthly desires, and until we recognize that the life

of those desires is fleeting, and not worth the thought and energy of a lifetime. But, in the meantime, we are all going through different experiences, and what for the moment helps one is useless to another. What is true to one is to another false. To talk philosophy to some people when suffering would be cruelty, to others it would help them to bear it.

People are starving, and if we have any sympathy we give them bread. Sympathy, or the sense of brotherhood, seeks to express itself in relieving suffering in every shape and form. But, I think, believing that in every human being there is a spark of the divine, that in acting from that belief we would do much to lessen the causes which produce so much suffering, and it gives us a grander and nobler conception of mankind if we think that all will at last become divine. But there are many different opinions, therefore many different standpoints from which to act, and one very real aspect of brotherhood shows itself in that wide tolerance which recognizes that in the many ways by which we express our ideas as to what we think is the best for the welfare of the race, we are all standing on that platform of brotherhood called sympathy.

Sympathy, blended with toleration, is a platform on which freedom reigns, from which no voice can bid us come or go, only our own hearts can place and retain us there.

A. P. D.

GOLDEN GRAIN.

"Let us not judge others too much, for they also may be acting up to the best light they have. Besides, Karma ever works, and ever the T. S. must feel it even more than other bodies. The effect of the fuss—for it is but that—must be for the best; for, if it kills the T. S., that proves a deserved death; if not, than the T. S. is stronger than ever. The latter is what I see as the final end, however far off."

"Do not judge in anger, for the anger passes, but the judgment remains."—W. Q. J.

"Forgive—and you find you have had nothing to forgive; true forgiveness is only clearer knowledge."—J. N.

"Reactions? How to guide and watch them? What causes the reaction? The action, of course. Now I think we must learn to offer up *all* things to the Supreme—states of consciousness as well. In fact I know it. Then, when we feel a great energy or exaltation, we should offer that up too, recognizing that *we* are not in fact exalted. Instead of that we say or think that this is real, and we cling to it. Then, be-

cause we cling and because we identify ourselves with that happy state, there comes a re action which we try to offer up. We can't, because we have not offered up the action. See? And even when we feel serene we should offer up that as well. So we remain apart from all the actions and re actions."—T.

THE OUTLOOK.

ANOTHER chapter in the T. S. annals has just concluded ; the first Crusade has been carried to a successful end. The journey from San Francisco to New York was attended with even more wonderful results than have been chronicled with regard to other places. The interest in Theosophy in America has been awakened more widely than ever ; the work seems but beginning ; the future beckons on, shining luminous and bright. The next important event will be the Convention of the T. S. A. on April 25th and 26th. We have always looked forward to this gathering of American Theosophists with hearts full of hope and expectation. This is as it should be. America was the starting-point of our movement in this century, and every fresh impetus of importance since then has naturally enough had its origin there. We send our warmest greetings, and await the unfolding of events with patience.

I have referred to the future, but it is well to remember that it is only made great and glorious by our action to-day. Every step has to be carefully taken ; every forward movement regulated by calmness and wisdom. A danger of over absorption in work has recently been referred to by one writer, and it is a timely hint. Nothing should be done excitedly ; the balance should be maintained without any abatement of enthusiasm. Work must always be carried on with zeal, but the mental attitude is important. The army of workers is increasing, and it is wisely generated. The movements of the army as a whole are full of absorbing interest, yet we must never overlook the outposts. Our Branches are the outposts, and they must always be kept running smoothly if the force is to be distributed effectively.

I have been asked to say something about Branch work. One or two observations may not, therefore, be out of place here. The work of a Branch should be well divided among its members. Each member can find something to do ; there is no limit to the lines of work. Responsibility for the condition of a Branch is not evaded by withdrawal from active participation in its work, because something displeasing may have been done, or on any ground. Cliques should be avoided, and the interest of each member enlisted and maintained. Care should

be taken not to ride hobby-horses too much. Harmony is essential, but cannot be forced; it must come about spontaneously and free. True harmony begins within. Differences may naturally arise over details of work, but this should never mar the unity in essentials. No one is altogether wrong; nor is anyone altogether right. The first step is toleration, from that harmony proceeds. If a point of difference arises, it is wise to turn attention to other matters on which perfect unanimity exists. Time works wonders, and when the point again comes up for consideration a complete change may have taken place and harmony prevail. Tact and discretion are necessary elements always. In short, nothing should interfere with the purpose for which a T. S. Branch exists—the formation of a nucleus of brotherhood. Only thus can we expect to ally ourselves with all the forces that make for brotherhood, and succeed in making our ideal an accomplished fact. Our hope lies in the spread of fundamental ideas. They evoke responsive echoes in the hearts of men and give rise to a feeling which finds its way through all barriers of creed and sect.

I have been asked also to give through this column some idea of the Correspondence Scheme suggested in last issue. It is not well to weary the general reader with too much detail, but the initial steps may be indicated. The scheme is international. Branches are regarded as Local Committees in their districts. The Consultative Committee is regarded as being composed of all Fellows of the T. S. of wide experience and knowledge throughout the world. The following letter should be sent to all newspapers possible by anyone who has time and cares for the work:

To THE EDITOR.

It may be of interest to your readers to learn that an International Correspondence Bureau has been established to give help and counsel to those in need, as far as possible, without any distinctions whatever. While it is of the first importance that the wants of the physically poor should receive attention from all those who have the good of their fellow-men at heart, it is equally necessary to remember that there are a vast number who literally starve for want of mental food, who seek guidance in the solution of life's many problems.

The Bureau is intended primarily to fill this want, although its work is not restricted to one particular sphere of service. The only condition imposed upon all desiring help is that they should be willing to help others in their turn.

In connection with the Bureau Local Committees have been already formed in many towns of importance, and a number of representative men belonging to almost every country have been formed into a Consultative Committee to be referred to when necessary. It is hoped that lectures, debates, etc., may be organized in time wherever possible, and that also helpful printed papers may be issued, and books and pamphlets which will in any way help on the work brought into requisition.

No fees whatever are charged, but letters should in all cases be accompanied by stamped envelopes for reply. Further particulars can be obtained from

Yours truly,

A member of a Branch should take up local papers, giving his or her name and address on the letter, but a list of papers can be made out and written to by any F. T. S. who is willing to undertake the work, and does not object to publication of name and address. Where replies are received and cannot be attended to by a local Branch, or satisfactorily by the person to whom the enquiry is addressed, they may be forwarded to me for reference to the Consultative Committee. Thus, I think, some good might be done in a quiet way, and I will be glad to hear from others who think likewise.

D. N. D.

NOTE.

OWING to the illness of Miss Violet North, who had to go away for a short rest and change, it was necessary to have the last two issues of THE IRISH THEOSOPHIST printed by an outside firm. The change in appearance was so perceptible that our readers will no doubt share our joy at Miss North's return to her old post in better health, for they, no less than ourselves, have learned to appreciate the high standard of her work. It speaks for itself. By her valuable help it has been possible to carry out an old wish of W. Q. J.'s—the establishment of a printing and publishing centre in his native city.

D. N. D.

THE T. S. IN EUROPE (IRELAND).

13, EUSTACE STREET, DUBLIN.

THE work continues to go on quietly and steadily, the public meetings in the Central Hall are perhaps not so well attended as might be wished, still there is evidence that there is a good deal of interest taken in these lectures by several regular attendants who have braved some very bad weather to put in an appearance.

Another interesting feature is the readiness of the local press to insert reports of the meetings, and the appearance recently in one of our weekly papers of several articles touching the Celtic revival from a more or less mystical standpoint.

The discussions during the ensuing month will be: April 22nd, *Theosophy*, J. Duncan; 29th, *The Celtic Renaissance*, Mrs. Duncan; May 6th, *The Brotherhood of Man*, Mrs. Dunlop; 13th, *Dreams*, G. W. Russell.

ROBT. E. COATES, *Hon. Sec.*